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Angela Lilly

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VIRGINIA'S DISSENSION TOWARD

THE MEXICAN WAR

by

Angela Lilly

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## Preface

The Mexican War was not a nationally popular war. Dissent came in various forms from opposition to extension of slave territory through the annexation of Texas, to fear of increased Executive power. The majority of dissension in Virginia came from the Whig party as the largest anti-Administration faction.

Thus, I tried to measure popular dissent by examining the "mouthpiece" of this opposition party, the Richmond Daily Whig. In trying to narrow my topic, I chose for the limits of my paper the period from Fall, 1845 to the war declaration of May 11, 1846 and the repercussions immediately following that declaration. I felt that this gave an adequate expression of the direct reaction and opposition to the President's war policy. The vehemence of popular reaction was perhaps the strongest at this point, with the Whigs recording on the pages of their paper, every breath of this opposition to what they considered an unjust and unnecessary war.

The Mexicans, through aggressive acts and unprecedented invasion of our soil, had crossed United States boundaries and the blood of Americans had been shed on American soil. This announcement came in President Polk's special message to Congress on May 11, 1846. He thus informed the Congress that a state of war existed between Mexico and the United States and emphasized the necessity of a formal war declaration. "As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by act of Mexico herself, we are called upon, by every consideration of duty and patriotism, to vindicate, with decision, the honor, the rights and the interests of our country...."<sup>1</sup> In such a way, Polk, presenting Congress with a demand for action, became the first President to request a recognition of war rather than a war declaration from his Congressional branch.<sup>2</sup>

The facts precipitating the war proclamation and the recognition of that existing state of conflict were the cause of much unrest within the country. Although Polk had stressed the wrongs committed by the Mexican Government, the Whigs, as the minority opposition party, raised strong doubts as to the injustice that Polk himself was committing. Their lack of confidence in the Administrative decision broke into loud vocal and written dissent, especially in the areas

of Whig strength in the Northeast.<sup>3</sup> With such leaders as John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster and John Davis, of Massachusetts, this area achieved primary importance in the fight for recognition of the majority party's wrongs against Congress and the public. However, the South was not without opposition to Polk's war. Such well known leaders as John C. Calhoun spoke violently against the actions of the Administration.<sup>4</sup> Virginia, too, most vehemently expressed her war opposition through a dissenting faction. Assisted by the printed word of the Richmond Daily Whig, as chief spokesman for the party, this faction and its newspaper furnished the major portion of opposition to the events preceding the declaration of war and the war itself.

The minority party was able, with a great deal of foresight, to take an apprehensive view of those events preceding the actual war message. In the months before May 11, Polk had taken several steps, marked by Whig spokesmen as definite moves toward aggression. As early as November, 1845, there was skepticism expressed as to the effectiveness of Congress in its action toward Mexico. An article that appeared in the Richmond Whig on November 10, stated that "the new Congress, which is to convene in Washington on the first of December will probably undertake. . . as large an assortment of wholesale mischief as has been undertaken for many years past. We anticipate vigorous attempts. . .

to bully and browbeat Mexico into surrender of sale of all her integral territory on this side of the Rio del Norte (Rio Grande). . . ."5 This prediction showed the force with which a Whig press attacked even primary action by the President and Congress. It also brought to signal importance the question of the Texas boundary. Conflict over the river valley led the way for United States involvement and the subsequent declaration that announced the aggression of Mexico.

In the fall and winter months of 1845, decisive action by the President moved events toward a peak. In his speech to the opening session of Congress in December, Polk informed the Legislative branch of his orders to General Zachary Taylor to move troops to a position "between the Nueces and the del Norte(River). . . ."6 The troop movement came as a result of petitions from the Texas Congress to ward off a threatened invasion of her territory by Mexico.<sup>7</sup> The Mexicans had strong opposition to the annexation of Texas to the United States, which took place by formal declaration of the United States Congress in December, 1845.

On November 10, 1845, John Slidell of Louisiana had been sent as envoy to the Mexican Government, illustrating Polk's renewed attempt to re-establish diplomatic relations between Mexico and the U. S. and thus "improve" the state of international affairs. The mission was conducted in

the greatest secrecy. However, when news of his visit reached the press, Slidell's purpose was disclosed as dealing not only with annexation of Texas(as most thought), but also the boundary dispute between Mexico and Texas, and the possible purchase of California and New Mexico. The Mexican Government, already in a tottering position, could not possibly upset her precarious balance by receiving the American minister. Had Slidell been received in Mexico City by the Herrera Government, the Mexican people would have even more cause to question the regime in power. Later in May 1846, the Richmond Whig delved into the dilemma that faced the Mexican officials, stating "the minds of the people of Mexico had been inflamed against the United States. . . by the aggressive acts of our Government. . . .(and) Herrera's administration was overthrown, expressly on the ground of its willingness to negotiate with the United States. . . ."8 With the overthrow of Herrera's Government in 1846, his successor Paredes refused to recognize the credentials of Mr. Slidell, and thus, our agent was unceremoniously sent home.

When Slidell was refused acceptance in Mexico City, President Polk ordered Taylor and his troops to move from Corpus Christi, to the left bank of the Rio Grande. When news of this move reached Richmond, the Whig expressed the sentiments of many Virginians by printing "the news from

Mexico is important and proves that matters in that country are by no means favorable to a quiet adjustment of existing difficulties with the United States. . . ."9 However, before Taylor's position had been established, the Whig forces skeptically looked at this action, aware of the possibility of a conflict. To quote their "tongue-in-cheek" observation,

the warhawks. . . are stirring their wings, and preparing to fan up the sparks of war into a combustible flare. It would seem a pity. . . that so much pugnacious patriotism as has been recently exhibited should be altogether wasted; and just in the nick of time, Mexico with her usual blundering awkwardness, steps in and presents a fair target for our concentrated wrath. . . .10

With his cannon aimed at the Mexican village and his camp at such a location as to blockade the river, Taylor's actions provoked cries among a dissenting element that the Mexican Government would term these troop movements as aggressive. As a statement of Virginia belief, the position of the army was again questioned. The published article posed the query, "if it was expedient. . . to send our army to the Rio Grande, why order them to pitch their tents directly opposite Matamoras; with their cannon pointing into the town? . . . this course looks very like a determination to provoke war with Mexico. . . ."11

The question of the Texas boundary was of major concern to the Whig faction in ascertaining the true origins of the war spirit. As pointed out, they basically felt that



Taylor's movement to the Rio Grande was an over extension of U. S. power. The Whigs looked to history for the basis of their argument in that the boundary of Texas, upon its annexation to the United States, had been accepted as that one established by the Texas Congressional statute of December 19, 1836. It was this statute plus a treaty agreed to by General Santa Anna, under duress, earlier that same year that extended the boundary of Texas possibly to the Rio del Norte(Rio Grande).<sup>12</sup> The question posed by most Whigs, here in Virginia and throughout, was the actual validity of the Rio Grande boundary claim. In commenting on the President's war message published in the Richmond Whig, they state that " the President's message assumes what remains to be proved, that the territory lying between the Nueces and the Rio del Norte is 'American soil'. . . ." <sup>13</sup> To the anti-Polk Whigs, this boundary had but anything been proven. The validity of a declaration by the Texas Revolutionary Convention held little weight with the strict constitutionalism of the Whigs. The apprehension they felt toward reliance on a shakey declaration of the Texas Congress, supported by the props of American arms, expressed itself in a published statement immediately following the war declaration. "It is manifest, if a mere declaration of the Texas Revolutionary Convention is to settle arbitrarily and conclusively the question of boundary, that. . .had (they) thought proper to embrace

within her paper limits the city of Mexico itself. . .we. . . should be bound to make that pretension good by force of arms. . . ."14

Yet the Whigs had stronger evidence for their dispute with the Administration. In a report by the Committee of Foreign Relations for the House of Representatives, of which Charles J. Ingersoll was Chairman, the Virginia dissenters took courage. This committee defined the boundary between Texas and Mexico as "between the Nueces and the Bravo rivers(still another name for the Rio Grande). . . ."15

It seemed an extension of theory to the Whigs that, by putting importance on this Congressional claim, the President should have treated the territory as a disputed area. Rather than move troops in to threaten the Mexicans, Polk should have left the dispute to peaceful negotiation. Expressed in the illustrious style of the period, the disputed claim came to life in the rhetoric of the Whig, "It would have been time enough to have planted our flag on the Rio Grande and to have cut the Gordian knot with the sword, when negotiation had failed to untie it. . . ."16

The Whigs, perhaps with proper perspective, saw that side of the conflict viewed by the Mexicans. Their writings tried to show, through dissent toward the Administration, the other side of the war "coin". In articles published by the Daily Whig, Mexican claims received prime importance as

the newspaper tried to justify its stand toward what the Whigs considered the aggressive policy of the United States. As shown in contemporary reports from the war scene (letters, newspaper correspondence and even notes from General Taylor)<sup>17</sup>, the climate of opinion tended toward regarding the territory as Mexican in nature, and thus, claims by the Mexican government had equal validity to United States claims. In fact, by choice of the people, these prior Mexican claims perhaps had more validity.<sup>18</sup> The Whigs felt that Texas laws had never extended over that portion of disputed land (between the Nueces and Rio Grande). The people still lived there, governed by Mexican laws and Mexican officials.<sup>19</sup> With conditions such as these, how could there be any question in the Mexican mind but that the U. S. government, by order of her executive, had invaded Mexican soil and "finding our troops on the banks of the Rio Grande, which she claims as a part of her soil, . . . attacked them. . . . (as they) had first expelled the 'people of the soil' whom they found in peaceful occupation of it on their arrival. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

Whig sentiment was not favorable to the formal declaration of war asked for by the President in the Spring of 1846. The dissension toward administrative policy appeared quite strongly in the debates in Congress following the war message. In addition to Polk's special address on May 11, the House of Representatives' Military Affairs Committee

presented a bill on the floor of the House authorizing a supply of men and money to be put at the President's disposal. Had this been the extent of the declaration, the dissenting elements would not have reacted quite so violently in their attempts at debate and in the press. However, Representative Brockenbough, a Florida democrat, administrative whip and "hawk", added a preamble to the provision bill. The preamble gave formal recognition to the actual state of war by reading, "Whereas, by the act. . . of Mexico, a state of war exists between that government and the United States. . . ." <sup>21</sup> Therefore, all affirmative votes seemed to advocate involvement in a war caused by Mexico and her violent action against the U. S., in addition to providing troops and supplies.

Since debate on the war bill was strictly limited to two hours, Whig members were expressly forbidden the time to read the major documents included with the war message. Only two protestors had ultimate success in being recognized by the Speaker of the House. These two demanded recognition in order to explain their reasons for requesting an excuse from voting. <sup>22</sup> One of those recognized, Representative Thomas H. Bayly from Virginia, expressed his resentment of the preamble and in turn voiced the sentiment of a less vocal minority. Bayly stated:

I ask to be excused from voting. I cannot vote in silence without placing myself in a false position. I consider the bill virtually a declaration of war. . .when we do not know that the invasion of our territory and the aggression acts are sanctioned by the Mexican Government . . . .I am unwilling, therefore, at this time, and under the circumstances, to vote for a declaration of war. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Still, the bill passed the House by a vote of 174 to 14 and went on the Senate debate.

Tactics of speed and majority push also railroaded the war bill hurriedly through the Senate Chamber. Having been so successful in the House, the democratic tacticians allowed only one day for debate and managed, above the roar of the minority opposition, to call for a vote on May 12th. The pleas of the Whig senators for time to review the documents accompanying the President's message went unheeded. Thus, by an even more overwhelming majority of 40 to 2, the Senate officially confirmed the state of war already announced by President Polk.<sup>24</sup>

The consequence of the war declaration was grave and feelings expressed by those of the opposition faction were strong. The thoughts of the Virginia Whigs in regard to the war centered around two major questions--the true southern boundary of Texas and the relationship of Mexico's aggression to it <sup>25</sup>and, the actual constitutionality of the war.<sup>26</sup> These questions of the war's validity gravitated toward one of two poles--one involving the preamble to the war provisions

bill, forced on the minority party with complete disregard to conscience; the other rotating around the axis of what was considered the usurpation of Congressional power by the President.<sup>27</sup>

The Whig minority judged the preamble as part of a "master plan" to absolve the President of his responsibility for the war. Through the vote for the provisions bill, Congress was forced to thrust what seemed to be majority support behind the Administration's war policy. The major avenue of dissent taken by the Whigs still revolved around the question of the Texas boundary and what they considered aggressive action by Polk toward Mexico. Thus, they viewed the Administration and not the Mexicans as committing the first wrong. In summary of their position toward the preamble, the Whig issued a statement that

the Administration regarded the vindication of its own wrong conduct. . . as of far more consequence than the defense of the country. . . . It is required that they (Congress) should acquit Mr. Polk of all censure in advance, by voting for a preamble asserting a fact that did not exist, . . . that 'war exists by act of Mexico'. . . .<sup>28</sup>

By such tactics, the majority party placed the dissenting elements of the minority in a position of weighing patriotism with politics.

The Senate debates on the war bill furnished what the Whigs considered a prime example of how a majority party could capitalize on public excitement in order to accomplish its

own policies.<sup>29</sup> In apprehension of a powerful majority, the Virginia Whig press spoke out against the Administration stating that "the insidious efforts. . .to forestall the public judgment. . .by the unqualified assumption, that, in crossing the left bank of the Rio Grande, the Mexicans have 'invaded' our soil. . . .", was a misrepresentation of facts.<sup>30</sup> This confusion of facts opened the way for the Whig condemnation of the preamble that "by the act of the Republic of Mexico, war exists". Since specific information was not available as a proven statement of Mexican intent, war under those circumstances was "not only unwise, but unjustifiable".<sup>31</sup>

The oppressiveness of the Democratic party approached a peak in the debate over the war bill. The Whigs felt that the dominant party was attempting to equate love of country with support of the Administration, and they believed that the two were by no means synonymous. They saw the preamble as the manipulating tool, grinding them into the surface of society with cries of "modified treason", as opposed to patriotism.<sup>32</sup> The diversity between politics and patriotism drove these men to raise their pleas toward the Presidential Party. They saw a distinction between the patriotic supply of troops and money to protect the country's frontier, and the political aspect of carrying out this protection with a war declaration. "It is in vain that the Administrative

party are implored, by the minority, to strike from the bill this political feature. . .so as to enable them, with clear consciences, to vote for the men and money. . . .The defense of the country, and the unanimity in the measures necessary for that object, might be important; but the vindication of the Administration and its investment with new and unprecedented powers was, in the estimation of the majority, still more so!"<sup>33</sup>

The reference to the "new" powers of the Executive provide an introduction to the prime question posed by the voices of Whig dissent. The chief opposition to the President and his policy came not because of the actual existence of war at all--that is, its origins--but, from the method used to declare the existence of a conflict. In the Senate debate on the war bill, Senator William S. Archer of Virginia emphasized the necessity of a Congressional declaration of war, warning, "It has been stated on highest authority that the President of the United States cannot declare war. The intervention of Congress is absolutely indispensable to constitute wars. . . .there can be no war until. . .the Congress of the U. S. . .authorize war . . . ."34

The Whigs did not deny that Mexico had given somewhat just cause for a war through past acts of aggression;<sup>35</sup> but, the technicalities of strict constructionalism of the Constitution appeared in their argument against the present



war. "If Congress had declared war. . .the justice of the war as well as the constitutionality, would have been cheerfully conceded by the united voice not only of our citizens, but of the civilized world. . . ."36 Yet, the origin of the war did not come from a Congressional declaration. It arose from the aggressive policy ordered by the President and his subsequent announcement of the "existing" conflict. To reiterate this position, Senator Archer, in reply to the President's message of May 11, declared " that the President does not affirm. . .a state of war. He cannot affirm it; for if he did, he would affirm that which in a legal and constitutional acceptation, could not be true. . . ."37

Still, the Whig faction had to face the fact that the special message of the President declared an existing state of war. Thus, their attack moved from the virtual questioning attitude presented by Senator Archer, to an all out attack on the usurpation of Congressional power by the President. In vehement indignation, the Whigs proclaimed the President's duplicity in his move toward detracting power from Congress. The strength of their feelings of fear toward the Executive and his newly attained power appeared in the Richmond Daily Whig scarcely less than three weeks after the proclamation of May 11th. The Whigs saw the "usurpation of the war-power" by that branch of the government, with which all the infractions of the Constitution since its adoption,

put together, are not to be compared in magnitude or in danger. . . ."38 They believed this increase of Presidential power a serious threat to the continuing effectiveness of the constitution. Thus, the protest against the war was the result, not of an avid humanitarian zeal for the defense of Mexico, but a strong desire for defense of the Constitution. What the Whigs termed usurpation of Congressional power by the executive branch instilled fear into their hearts, provoking loud cries against the war. They saw

the usurpation itself a dangerous enlargement of Executive authority beyond the limits prescribed for it by the Constitution, and as tending still farther to strengthen the monarchical branch of our Federative system, the powers of which have alarmingly increased, are still increasing, and ought to be, nay must be diminished, or the whole theory of our government is revolutionized, and the checks and limitations of the Constitution are weaker than ropes of sand.39

The Whigs felt that the President had no more right to pursue a policy that would lead inevitably to war, than to declare war himself. In their view, President Polk had committed both of these wrongs and thus, by his policy must take the responsibility for a war declaration. It was this power that was expressly withheld from him by the Constitution. Therefore, through the strong grounds of constitutional structuralism, the Whigs based their claim that the war, "in its origin, (was) both unconstitutional and unnecessary. . . .

However, since the war had been declared by act of Congress and the Whigs did not wish to commit political

suicide,<sup>41</sup> their dissension toward the origins of the conflict were rechanneled into support of the war effort. To quote their press, "We are in favor of an energetic prosecution of the war, without reference to its origin or to its necessity; now that it has commenced. . . ."<sup>42</sup> They no longer felt that the carrying on of war involved unjust acts. However, they did feel forced, by what they considered unnecessary support of the Administration, to vote the men and supplies needed for the speedy termination of the war effort. Whig voices defended their position of seemingly conflicting ideology by saying, "The duty of every citizen is to oppose such acts of his own Government as in his opinion are wrong in themselves; but nevertheless, if they result in war, to support it by all the means in his power, in its vigorous and successful prosecution. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

With similar patriotic zeal, the Whig faction produced a warning note to their fellow countrymen. They held the viewpoint that the war was not a just one, but a war of aggression on the part of the President. This aggressive tendency extended not only toward the Mexican-U. S. border conflict, but also included the Executive's unwarranted moves against the powers of Congress. In a glowing attempt to rally support for their position, the Virginia Whigs declared, "we shall not hesitate, . . .to stimulate our countrymen to uphold the honor of our flag, at the same time to warn them

not to be misled, by their patriot impulses, into even a tacit defense of an act of the Executive. . . ."44 The harsh war action of the President, condemned over and over by the Whigs, held prominence as the direct origin of the war and thus, the Administration alone should be held answerable for the war involvement. This warning in regard to aggressive action tried to guard the public against what the Whigs considered the Administration's attempt to gain popular support through erroneous information.45

The great fear the Whigs possessed dealt with the threat of American arms committing the United States to military involvement and thus, to achieving our "manifest destiny" by force of weapons. In a logical prediction weeks before the war declaration, the Richmond Whig published the following fearful statement,

The army of Texas is on the advance. . . we may soon hear of a new triumph of American arms. But, in such a cause, and with such a foe, even victory loses half its charm. Hitherto our sword has never been unsheathed, save in defence of our own territory. Now it is to be drawn, for the first time, in a war of aggression--never perhaps to be returned to its scabbard until our 'manifest destiny' has arrived at its complete fulfillment, in the dominion of the United States over the whole of North America. . . .46

They believed that through proper negotiation, the boundary question could have been solved and thus, the existence of war prevented. The strong apprehension they held generated from what they felt would continue from a boundary dispute

to a war of "conquest and annexation, which in the end may be far more disastrous than even defeat itself. . . ."47

This projected disaster found solid root in the Whig fear that such a continued and prolonged conflict would give the President increased power--a force the Whigs feared desperately for him to control.<sup>48</sup>

Thus the Whigs reaction toward the war was one of a violent nature on paper and in debate. It generated from fear--not only of aggressive U. S. patterns, but from the overextension of Constitutional powers by the President. They felt their position threatened by the Executive's apparent attempt to dissolve those powers ingrained in the system of constitutional government.

The declaration of the Mexican War furnished a prime example of the failure of the minority to function as a breaking force on what had been termed the tyranny of the majority.<sup>49</sup> The opposition that the Whig faction expressed in Virginia gravitated from indignation at the initiation of hostile action to condemnation of the ability of an Administration that would allow the citizens of the country to be placed in a perilous position. The President had taken it upon himself to endanger the lives of American citizens without a sanction from Congress--that body expressly given the power to determine armed conflict. The Whigs felt that

they were joined in their opposition to Presidential policy by a majority of the population who realized the ineptitude of the Administration.

A primary example of written dissent toward the war appeared in a concise form several days after the war proclamation. The Richmond Daily Whig emphasized the moral lesson of the conflict in regard to what could be taught future generations from the grave mistakes made in 1846:

Is there not a lesson to be taught, at this epoch, to those who may here after be disposed to involve their country in unholy wars, by the risk of Mr. Polk and his advisers have run, in bringing about the present crisis? The people, too, themselves, may see the folly of elevating weak men to the exercise of power which should be entrusted alone to the patriot, the statesman and the philanthropist. How can the present rulers in Washington rest their heads upon a downy pillow and hope to seek repose, whilst the reflections of their own minds must cause them to exclaim, 'Oh Lord, we acknowledge our transgressions--we indeed have sinned!' What rivers of blood have been shed!--what wretchedness and misery have already been brought upon the country, by the imprudent acts of an reckless ruler! Do not countless widows and orphans, made wretched by the fate of those most dear to them, cry aloud for retributive justice to be heaped upon the heads of those who have inflicted the blows? How can it be possible that the authors of such misery in others cannot be also authors of wretchedness in themselves?<sup>50</sup>

The war represented a source of misery and discontent for all involved. The Whigs, with their opposition to the policy of war, tried to guide the people toward reaction within a framework of voiced and written discontent. Yet, in their form of reaction, the Virginia Whigs felt compelled

to support the United States involvement in this unjust and unnecessary conflict. Thus, along with strong questioning of Administrative action, they hoped for a speedy end to a war that should never have begun.

### Footnotes

1. Congressional Globe, 29 Congress, 1 Session, 783, (May 11, 1846).
2. Frederick Merk, "Dissent in the Mexican War" in Dissent in Three American Wars (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 35.
3. Ibid., 35-63.
4. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 795-804 (May 12, 1846).
5. Richmond Daily Whig, November 10, 1845. Reprint from the New York Tribune.
6. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 5, (December 1, 1845).
7. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 783, (May 11, 1846).
8. Whig, May 27, 1846.
9. Whig, January 17, 1846.
10. Whig, February 2, 1846.
11. Whig, May 5, 1846. Reprint from the Charleston Mercury.
12. George Pierce Garrison, Westward Extension, 1841-1850 (Albert B. Hart, ed., The American Nation: A History, XVII, N. Y., 1906), 106, 206.
13. Whig, May 14, 1846.
14. Ibid. Italics are by the newspaper.
15. Whig, June 2, 1846. Italics are by the newspaper.
16. Whig, May 13-14, 1846.
17. "A letter from an officer in the army. . .stated that the American army was encamped. . .on the soil of the Mexican State of Tamaulipas. If this were an isolated expression of opinion, it might not be entitled very great weight. . . .The intelligent correspondent of the New York Spirit of the Times, for example, says: 'our situation here is an extraordinary one. Right in the enemy's country, occupying their corn and cottonfields, the people of the



soil leaving their homes, and we, with a small handfull of men, are marching with colors flying and drums beating, right under the guns on one of their principal cities, displaying the star spangled banner as if in defiance under their very nose.' Can there be a more vivid picture than this of the invasion of a foreign territory? . . . In what light the resident population of the country regarded our army, is shown by the universal flight on its approach. General Taylor himself, in one of his dispatches, indeed, graphically depicts the consternation as well as the resentment excited by his appearance. Writing from Matamoras on the 23rd of March, he says, 'While on my way hither, our column, was approached by a party. . . .from Matamoras, desiring an interview with me. . . .(they) sent me a formal protest of the prefect of the northern district of Tamaulipas against our occupation of the country. . . .' In what other part of Texas, we ask, would the American army and the American flag have met with such a reception? All will concede that it could only have been upon Mexican soil and from a Mexican population that an American commander would have been thus greeted." Whig, May 20, 1846 .

18. "Texas has always, we are told, claimed to the Rio Grande. To this, it is answered, the Mexicans have always claimed to the Nueces. And the fact that within the limits so claimed by Texas, the Mexicans maintained undisputed sway, ought certainly to be regarded as prima facie evidence of the justness of her title, at least to that portion of the disputed territory which was and had always been in the quiet possession of her citizens, and under the undisputed government of her laws.  
Whig, May 13, 1846.
19. Whig, May 19, 1846.
20. Whig, May 20, 1846.
21. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 792-795 (May 11, 1846).
22. Ibid.; Merk, 38.
23. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 795 (May 11, 1846); Biographical Directory of American Congress, 1774-1961, 144,529 (Washington, 1961).
24. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 795-804 (May 12, 1846).

25. Whig, May 13-20, June 30, 1846.
26. Whig, May 16, 1846.
27. Whig, May 20, 1846.
28. Whig, June 2, 1846.
29. Whig, May 15, 1846.
30. Whig, May 13, 1846.
31. Whig, May 16, 1846.
32. Whig, June 2, 1846.
33. Whig, May 15, 1846; Biographical Directory of Congress, 144, 486.
34. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 784 (May 11, 1846).
35. Whig, May 20, June 30, 1846.
36. Whig, June 30, 1846.
37. Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 784 (May 11, 1846).
38. Whig, June 2, 1846.
39. Whig, June 3, 1846.
40. Whig, June 30, 1846.
41. The Whigs failed to vote against the bill because they feared the same fate that had met their predecessors, the Federalists. This party destroyed themselves as a result of staunch opposition to the War of 1812. Merk, 45.
42. Whig, June 3, 1846
43. Whig, June 30, 1846.
44. Whig, June 2, 1846.
45. Whig, May 15, May 19, 1846.
46. Whig, March 23, 1846.
47. Whig, May 16, 1846.

48. Whig, June 10, 1846.

49. Merk, 45.

50. Whig, May 25, 1846.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

The Congressional Globe, 29 Congress, 1 Session, December 1, 1845-August 10, 1846.

This record of the proceedings of Congress was indispensable as a source of technical information. It gave a precise account of the message of the President and position taken by the Senators and Representatives from Virginia. Through these "minutes" of the Congress, one is able to reconstruct events from a national viewpoint.

Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia, Session 1845-46. Richmond, 1846.

A report from the House of Delegates of the State Legislature, this compilation of daily proceedings offered some insight into the general trend of the lower house toward the War.

Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Session 1845-46. Richmond, 1846.

A complementary addition to the House Journal, this volume offered a day by day account of the Senate business. It also gave some basic idea of how the State Senate approached the prospect of war.

The Richmond Daily Whig, September 1845-June 1846.

I used this newspaper as my major source for tracing public opposition to the Mexican War and the Polk war policy. It proved to be an invaluable source in judging the strength of written opposition. As the "mouthpiece" for the Whig party, the Daily Whig joined her counterparts throughout the nation in staunch denunciation of the aggression of the United States.

## Secondary Sources

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